|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | USSR | Nazi Germany | | Fascist Italy |
| Economy | Believed that only strict centralized control would allow production needed to urbanize and industrialize.  Soviet economy based on agri, needed agri exports to industrialize as capital and technology needed—this couldn’t be done if peasants withheld grain  Collectivization of agriculture introduced 1929, by 1936 90% of households collectivized, 200,000 collective farms from 25 million small peasant farms  Much opposition to this policy, disastrous famines of 1932-3 killed millions (5-8) esp in Ukraine, grain requisitioning still went on  Five year plans instead of NEP, full state control of resources and labor, economic growth and self-sufficiency  First 5yr plan officially adopted in 1929, called for massive increase in industrial output but lacked skilled labor—to increase production of means of production, i.e. build iron and steel manufacturing plants, electric power stations, build infrastructure inc railways and increase production of coal and oil—plan declared ‘success’ year early  Encouraged skilled technicians and engineers to come from abroad on fixed-term contracts, foreign exchange accumulated by grain sales, harsh labor laws and stakhanovite movement, statistics often changed and foreign experts blamed  Second five year plan, heavy industrial goods production, country needed trains trucks and tractors, stalin had to make sure resources for rearmament present as enemies all around  Grain production finally reached pre-kolkhoz levels after 1935, livestock never recovered till after stalin | No clear economic program in 1933—nazis had claimed to want to respond to needs of small farmers and smaller urban traders, but in reality looked to reassure big business  Some token acknowledgement of socialist aspects early 1933—all peasant debts suspended march-oct 1933, high tariffs put on imported food  REICH FOOD ESTATE gave peasant farmers guaranteed prices for produce, controlled food production and sales, targets, quotas and prices  REICH ENTAILED FARM LAW sept 1933 small farmers given security of tenure by forbidding confiscation/mortgaging of small farms owned by Aryans  LAW OF PROTECTION OF RETAIL TRADE (may 1933) helped urban traders, forbade new dept stores  But main concern was defence economy for future war especially after 1936—state regulated economy  Pursuit of autarky (this drove out socialist ideas by demanding dev of modern large-scale farms), rearmament with support of big businesses  1933-1936 over 1600 new CARTEL arrangements put in place—70% of production in hands of monopolies  Peak of 6 million unemployment in 1932, exports at 39% of 1928 level  Schacht, pres of Reichsbank, was excellent: June 1933 law to reduce unemployment, gov spending on pub work schemes, subsidies for pvt construction, income tax rebates/loans to encourage industrial activity.  Emergency relief schemes, REICH LABOUR SERVICE (est 1934) which worked on various civil, military and agri projects, 7000km of autobahnen to be constructed  Specific regulations like no machinery used for roadbuilding when surplus labor available  Expansion of party and national bureaucracy, discouragement of female labor inc marriage allowances to remove women from jobs, MARCH 1935 CONSCRIPTION and rearmament  Tax concessions offered to biz, MEFO BILLS (credit notes issued by reichsbank and guaranteed by gov)—deficit financing, repayments on mefo bills accounted for 50% of gov expenditure 1934-5  Mefo bills permitted subsidies and agreements e.g. match pvt investment in car industry, helped to stimulate housing, road construction and variety of industries  1933 controls to limit drain of foreign exchange by paying foreign debts in reichsmarks  1934 debt repayment stopped, creditors given bonds instead. NEW PLAN 1934: increased gov regulation of imports, dev of trade with ledc, dev of trade w/central and SE Europe. Series of trade agreements (Balkan and south American states) for import of raw materials, paid for in reichsmarks so encouraged to buy German goods in return  Avoidance of labor troubles by dissolving trade unions, banning strikes and DAF creation 1933, use of propaganda to increase illusion of success and prosperity and maintain confidence  Seizure of jewish property and Austrian assets following 1938  1936 FOUR YEAR PLAN  Emphasis on autarky, plants were built for synthetic material substitutes like artificial rubber  Special encouragement to chem. Ind and dev of synthetic fuels like coal to produce oil  Steelworks to be developed using lower grade ores available within germany  Emphasis on heavy machinery  Regulations controlling foreign exchange, labour, raw materials dist. And prices, targets for pvt ind est. For labor force, raw materials, agri, price control, foreign exchange and steel plant coordingating rearmament  Pvt industry continued but failure to conform and meet expectations meant taken over  Some successes—growth in output in all keey areas but overall targets not met esp for synthetic materials and production of substitutes was costly, 1939 germany still imported 1/3 of raw materials and shortage of foreign exchange to buy imports remained.  Plan impeded by bureaucratic inefficiency and internal rivalry | |  |
| Political structure |  | SPS centralized state, in the localities Nazis had begun to infiltrate Lander govs from early in 1933, seized pub buildings and newspaper offices, March onwards, state govs forced to resign as unable to control SA violence  Nazi gov already appointed many loyal commissioners to states—LAW JAN. 1934 formalized situ—old provincial assemblies of lander abolished, all areas under control of Nazi governors and subordinate to Reich gov in berlin  Nazi governors were also local nazi party representatives  Hitler allowed parallel institutions to develop rather than creating undiluted party rule—competition within state between different agencies, sometimes between diff branches of party—e.g. local gov, minister-presidents of each Land retained alongside new Reich governors (Hitler seen as lazy, disinterested or done on purpose to make him necessary to sort out mess—ultimate control)  LAW TO ENSURE UNITY OF PARTY AND STATE (Dec. 1933=ssp)  Hindenburg died August 1934, all members of armed forces swore personal oath of loyalty to hitler  Hitler chancellor+pres=fuhrer | |  |
| Propaganda |  | Goebbels portrayed hitler as man who personally saved country after Reichstag fire  Cult of the Fuhrer  Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda—masses could be easily won over through regular exposure to propaganda in schools, towns and workplace  Separate chambers to oversee press, radio, threater, music, creative arts, film  Reich Broadcasting corporation (est. 1933)  All public spaces relayed important speeches through loudspeakers  People’s receiver became standard item in home—limited frequency range, prevented from listening to foreign broadcasts, sold cheaply, 70% owned them by 1939  All films censored and degenerate artists forbidden  Concert halls bedecked in swastikas  Constant meetings, rallies, festivals (e.g. Hitler’s birthday and anniversary of becoming chancellor), sporting events, parades  LEBENSBORN 1935 encouraged unmarried women with good racial credentials to become pregnant with selected SS men  Honour cross of German motherhood est 1939  Art themes: blood and soil, peasant cast as pure Aryan blood, anti-feminism, anti-semitism, return to classics, solidarity and community  1933 coordinated BURNING OF BOOKS—works by jews, Bolsheviks and anything ‘un-German’  GREAT German ART EXHIBITION annual, propaganda pageant, REICH KULTURKAMMER (culture chamber) ensured only ‘suitable’ art, many artists expelled or left  Modernist art removed, tried to remove jazz and foreign dance band music |  | |
| Religion |  | Majority protestant, but many catholics, jehovah’s witnesses refused conscription so sent to camp  German Christian movement emerged, supported by young pastors—new national People’s Church, described selves as SA of church  1933 REICH CHURCH with help of ^  Reich bishop to coordinate protestant churches, some German Christians wanted to remove old testament, but not all approved of mvmt  1933 group of 100 pastors set up Pastors’ emergency league to resist German Christians and defend traditional Lutheranism, some arrested in 1934 and league broke to form Confessional Church  Confessional schools abolished, young people’s time taken up so no Sunday school attendance  Catholic church CONCORDAT and dissolution of Centre party 1933, agreed to allow educational, youth and communal orgs, but propaganda insulting clergy and catholics, catholic schools disappeared by 1939, orgs and societies removed—1936 church youth orgs disbanded  1937 pope issued with burning anxiety attacked nazi beliefs  Only one catholic bishop expelled and one imprisoned, so protest was ltd  1938 nativity plays and carols banned |  | |
| Education |  | 1934 Centralized Reich Education ministry, no substantial change to structure apart from series of elite schools inc NAPOLAS, HITLER schools, ORDENSBURGEN  Biology, racial diff and social Darwinism, history to awaken sense of nationalism and grandeur, emphasis on folklore, genetics, racial theory, huge emphasis on sport, religious edu no more after 1935, differentiation between m and f curriculum  1939 all teachers reich civil servants  Nazi teaches’ and lecturers’ leagues organized special camps to reinforce nazi values, teachers under 50 expected to do sports, jewish theses banned |  | |
| Youth Groups |  | By end of 1933 control over all youth org except catholic orgs  HJ (Bund Deutscher madel for girls, League of faith and beauty) compulsory 1936  1939 catholic groups closed  Recitation of nazi dogma and verses of nazi party anthem, map reading, war games, sporting standards, cross-country marches, oath and vow to Fuhrer—train boys for war, girls for motherhood  Uniforms, competitions, expeditions, sports, musical activities, displays, competition penalized weak or uncommitted, values of honor, discipline, self-sacrifice, contempt for moderation, intellect and sensitivity, encouraged to spy on parents  NAPOLAS—national pol edu inst., est 1933, fell under SS in 1936, produced highly trained young for armed forces, communal style of living  10 ORDENSBURGEN party-controlled nazi colleges 1937 with emphasis on phys. Training  Some young disliked HJ and by later 1930s alt youth groups like edelweiss pirates (working class) and swing movement (mid/upper) |  | |
| Workers’ groups |  | Lef-wing socialist trade unions dissolved May 1933  German Labor Front (DAF) replaced them  Membership compulsory and employees could no longer negotiate wages/conditions with employers  New academies or ‘fronts’ controlled professions  Teachers required to join National Socialist Teachers’ League (NSLB)  November 1933 uni lecturers required to sign declaration in support of Hitler and join Nazi lecturers’ association |  | |
| Press |  | Ministry controlled press through censorship and by allowing Nazi publishing house to buy private newspapers—1939, owned 2/3 of press  German news agency regulated supply of news and Goebbels held daily press conference with editors to ensure right messages in print  Editors held responsible, liable for prosecution if they printed unapproved material |  | |
| Opposition groups |  | March-July 1933 all other political parties forced to disband, KPD had been banned by presidential decree of feb right after Reichstag fire, many less extreme socialists also imprisoned but SPD not officially banned till june  DNVP lost its role once it became part of Nazi coalition and disbanded itself, July Catholic center party followed as part of concordat with pope (1933), LAW AGAINST ESTABLISHMENT OF PARTIES (July 1933)—criminal to organize any party outside of Nazis  November 1933 elections naturally had all Nazi Reichstag  NIGHT OF LONG KNIVES—JUNE 1934  SA members hinted displeasure at consortion with elites, wanted more socialist policies, hitler may have felt SA served its role, uncontrollable violence and demands of Rohm to be put at head of merged army and SA (such a force would be undisciplined). Rohm and 85 others killed, number may be closer to 200, not all SA men, Strasser (nazi who had attempted to split party in 1932 alongside Schleicher), Schleicher. Von Papen put under house arrest. Action justified to Reichstag as helping to protect Reich from impending revolt; Reichstag confirmed hitler’s powers had no constitutional bounds as Reichstag condoned actions |  | |
| Minority | Women emancipated at first, divorce and abortion easy, backwards religious practices banned, but in 1936 new family law made divorce more expensive and abortion only for medical reasons—too much decrease in population  79% of doctors were women by 1939 | LAW OF RESTORATION OF PROFESSIONAL CIVIL SERVICE (april 1933), non-aryans forced to retire and jews and other opponents (alien elements) purged from positions in admin, couts, schools and unis—not until 1939 that membership of party compulsory, in interests of efficiency, personnel usually continued  Birth control centres closed, abortion illegal unless to eradicate genetic defects, maternity benefits increased, income tax allowances for dependent children raised and large families enjoyed concession  Only genetically pure allowed to procreate, 1935 onwards fitness to marry certificate before marriage licence issued, 1938 unproductive marriages could be ended  Mothers who failed to support children’s education as national comrades e.g. attending HJ could have kids removed  1934 all married women forced out of careers in medicine, legal professions and civil service, ineligible for jury service because they couldn’t think logically, women banned from senior positions in nazi leaderships, no f members of Reichstag, only 10% uni entrants female until shortage of pro and tech experts in late 30s relaxed  Compulsory agri labor service introduced 1939 for women under 25  Asocials (work-shy, criminals, tramps, beggars, homos, alcoholics, etc), biological outsiders (hereditary defects, gypsies and jews)  1933 3-500,000 ‘beggars and tramps’ rounded up, some given permit to perform compulsory work in return for board and lodgings  LAW AGAINST DANGEROUS HABITUAL CRIMINALS 1933—conc camps, black triangle, compulsorily sterilized  1938 WORK-SHY REICH program, 10,000 incarcerated  1939 REICH CENTRAL AGENCY for struggle against JUVENILE DELINQUENCY, youth concentration camp in 1940 set up  JULY 1933 compulsory sterilization of specified ‘hereditary’ ill, like alcoholism, schizophrenia, hereditary courts est to consider individual cases  350,000 sterilized  Euthanasia program began 1939  Gypsies persecuted, NUREMBERG LAWS OF 1935 banned marriage btwn Aryans and non-aryans, RESEARCH CENTER FOR RACIAL HYGIENE  1938 gypsies registered, 1940 deported  Only about 500,000 jews, but portrayed as serious racial threat and root cause of germany’s ills  SA demands led to one-day boycott in march 1933, but not continued while economy fragile and intnal repercussions could happen  LAW FOR PROTECTION OF German BLOOD (Nuremberg laws), banned mixed marriages and jews not citizens anymore  1938 jews no longer given pub contracts, all property over 5000 marks registered and couldn’t be sold, jews no longer in biz, docs, dentists, lawyers forbidden to serve Aryans, jewish kids Israel and sarah, identity cards and stamped passports  KRISTALLNACHT 1938 attacks on synagogues, biz, homes, shops, 91 murdered, 20,000 sent to camps, excuse was murder of German diplomat in paris by jew, but orchestrated by Goebbels  Aryan only city areas, segregated schools  120,000 jews left germany by 1937  Annexation of Austria added 190,000 jews to popn so intensified emigration policy, polish invasion added 3 million in 1939—ghettos, curfew, yellow star, labor service |  | |
| Terror |  |  |  | |
| Foreign Policy |  |  |  | |

**How much of a miracle/how effective was nazi economy:**

* Unemployment fell from 6 mi-2.5 within 18 months of hitler’s coming to power—by 1936 down to 1.6 mil, then 1939 less than 200000
* Economic investment increased, public expenditure reached 23.6 bil in 1939—considerable advance on 17.1 bil in 1932
* But economic situ had been improving before he took office
* Bruning ensured reparations ended
* Unemployment began to fall after july 1932
* Work creation schemes established and world economy recovery had laid basis
* Policies not total success—reserves of foreign currency remained low and balance of payments in deficit, grew worse after 1936
* Rearmament put strain on economy
* Real wages increased but price of food rose, affected workers and poorer peasants
* 4 million strong wehrmacht (armed forces), so only 2 mi extra jobs over 6 years, mostly in manufacture of armaments to equip wehrmacht

**Mussolini totalitarian?**

* Executive power lay with him, ostensibly responsible to king but not to parl
* Appointed and dismissed ministers who were subordinate not equals
* After 1932 held 7/14 ministerial portfolios
* Other ministers were increasingly mediocre ppl
* Leading figures edged out of office
* Served as interior minister himself
* Directly controlled prefects in provinces and through them sec forces
* Well informed of pop humor by agents of secret police
* Elective element in local gov abolished by reforms of 1926 and 1928
* Appointment of podesta increased power of central gov
* 1928 electoral reform brought chamber of deputies under his control
* Senate members appointed for life by king but all senators conservative, had voted confidence in matteotti crisis
* 1939 lower house 🡪 chamber of fasces and corporations selected by grand council of fascism
* Not even pretence of dem electoral process retained after that unlike ‘plebiscites’ of 1929 and 1934
* Grand council made into constitutional organ of state in 1928 supposed to be supreme coordinating body of regime but duce had sole right to summon and set agenda
* Appointed all members himself, didn’t consult it before lateran pacts, ethiopia invasion of 1935 and ww2 entry 1940
* Portrayed as epitome of virile military virtue, as common man by peasants’ sides, man of the people
* Italy definitely sps but role of fascist party carefully curbed—servant of state not ruler
* Subordination of fascist party to m by successive purges of old guard
* Bloody purge like night of long knives not necessary as old guard rank and file swamped by opportunists and employment seekers
* No equivalent of gauleiter party bosses of nazi germany
* Regime coopted cadres of existing economic and bureaucratic classes who wanted to retain influence, thus ensured consensus
* Armed forces with monarchy as shield was least affected of all state institutions except for relatively new air force shaped by Balbo
* Chief function of party was extension of police and militia with general supervisory role over its members
* Largely decorative and propaganda role
* Only period of sustained anti-f activity when effects of great depression worst—1930-3
* Social distress and unrest, number of show trials of anti-F groups and individuals including Guelfs, only serious catholic anti-f group
* 1926-7 ‘exceptional’ laws and decrees suppressed freedom of expression, association and assembly, range of penalties for anti-f activity, restoration of death penalty for most serious crimes
* OVRA secret police
* No concentration camps or mass liquidations
* Imprisonment, banishment usual punishments
* 90% vote for f in 1929 out of police terror and propaganda, but also degree of popular support due to lateran accords and economic prosperity
* 1936 foreign policy—capture of abyssinia meant peak in popularity
* Resentment and fear of relationship with nazis
* Press by 1930s standardized and staid due to detailed directives issued by ministry of popular culture
* Radio and cinema control
* Media aimed at creating new italian thoroughly f
* Staterun instituto luce to produce propaganda films, but not as effective and sophisticated as nazis
* Filmmakers generally undisturbed while imitating hollywood dream factory
* Controls and quotas imposed on foreign films but not severe
* Royal academy of Italy
* Artists and intellectuals not as rigidly regimented, most could get on by gesture of public support, party card or f oath
* By 1930 most famous intellectuals emigrated
* 1926 all rival youth groups except catholics dissolved
* 1929 balilla under ministry of education
* Increasing pressure to enrol kids
* 1932 membership compulsory
* All these attempts to create consensus by socialising and ‘nationalising’
* Italians had their limitations, as Vicki De Grazia has demonstrated for the
* *dopolavoro* (De Grazia, 1982, pp. 124–6). Fascist organisations were, on the
* whole, more successful in urban rather than rural areas, in Northern and Central
* rather than Southern Italy, among middle and lower-middle classes than the
* working-classes or peasantry. Despite the huge commitment to these
* organisations, including the Massaie, the 2 million-strong rural women’s
* movement, the Fascist regime failed to break down the barriers between town
* and country and ‘real’ and ‘legal’ Italy. Deep-rooted peasant cynicism and
* fatalism, and a profound mistrust of the state and its agents, militated against
* associationalism of any kind, especially in the rural South
* However successful or unsuccessful the regime was in ‘manufacturing
* consensus’, it could always rely upon the forces and institutions which
* constituted what Alberto Aquarone has described as the ‘block of consensus’
* (Aquarone, 1965, p. 15). This comprised the monarchy and with it the armed
* forces, the Church and the landed and business elites, in other words those
* elements of the Italian establishment which had welcomed and, in part at least,
* helped Fascism to come to power. As long, that is, as its policies were in
* harmony with the interests they represented. The major survivor from the Liberal
* constitutional order was the monarchy. Mussolini, with his tactical abandonment
* of his republicanism in 1922, recognised that monarchism was the essential
* prerequisite for any compromise with the establishment. Behind the monarchy
* stood the civil service, the judiciary and the armed forces, the latter linked
* through particularly close bonds of loyalty to the King. The monarchy was also
* able to provide Fascism with historical continuity and legitimacy; it would have
* been foolish to have attempted to overthrow the King at this stage given his postwar
* popularity.
* The relationship between King and Duce was not an especially cordial one, but
* it worked. The King never openly challenged Fascism in the 1920s and 1930s,
* and would never have dreamt of doing so. In any case, Fascism brought him new
* titles and dominions: Emperor of Ethiopia in 1936 and King of Albania in 1939.
* On the other hand, the King was forced to suffer in silence the diminution of
* prerogative imposed by Fascism, such as the transfer to the Grand Council of the
* power to fix the line of succession and the transfer to Mussolini of the King’s
* supreme command of the armed forces in time of war.
* Mussolini found the survival of the monarchy an irritant, especially in the late
* 1930s when the contrast between himself and Hitler was starkly revealed by the
* latter’s state visit to Rome. Hitler was head of both government and state and
* therefore drove with Victor Emmanuel in the first carriage; Mussolini, as only
* head of government, drove in the second. The Duce increasingly inveighed, in
* private, against the monarchy and threatened to ‘settle accounts’ with it after his
* successful war. His unhappiness with the survival of the monarchy was well
* motivated: the monarch possessed the power to appoint and dismiss the head of
* government, and retained the support of the armed forces, thus constituting a
* brake on the totalitarian ambitions of Fascism and ultimately its Achilles heel.
* The other major institutional and social force with which Mussolini had to come
* to terms between 1925 and 1929 was the Catholic Church. Despite the
* benevolence which it had displayed towards Fascism and its leader in the
* preceding period, there were still serious problems to be resolved before a stable
* relationship could be established between them. Starting in 1926, representatives
* of the Vatican and Italy negotiated to achieve a full and definitive settlement of
* the ‘Roman Question’, spurred on, as far as the Vatican was concerned, by the
* continuing process of ‘Fascistisation’ which was demolishing many of the
* economic and social organisations of the Catholic subculture and which now
* threatened its youth organisations.
* A final reconciliation between the Papacy and Italy was brought about in the
* Lateran Pacts, signed on 11 February 1929. The pacts consisted of the Treaty,
* which re-established a tiny portion of the papal ‘Temporal Power’, in the form of
* the sovereign ‘State of the Vatican City’, the Financial Convention and the
* Concordat, which regulated certain matters between Church and state inside Italy,
* including Church property, marriage and education. The Pacts undoubtedly
* represent one of the greatest achievements of Fascism and laid the foundations
* for a ‘marriage of convenience’ between the Vatican and Italian Fascism which
* was to last for nearly a decade. In this period the Catholic Church saw eye to eye
* with Fascism on a number of issues—Communism, social stability, the
* superiority of rural over urban society, the role of women, the encouragement of
* childbirth and so on. As a result, the Church gave its support to Fascism in the
* elections of 1929 and 1934, and rather more guarded support for Fascist
* corporatism and imperialism, thereby helping to consolidate the consensus on
* which the regime was built in the 1930s. Despite the euphoria in both camps, the
* ‘marriage’ was not without its conflicts. Both sides had unrealistic expectations
* of the benefits they were going to derive from the Conciliation of 1929. The
* original anti-clericalism of the early days lived on to some extent in the Fascist
* movement. Mussolini, therefore, sought to reassure his followers that the
* Conciliation was not a victory of the Church over the state.
* Elements of anti-Fascism, as well as afascism, an indifference to the regime,
* also survived among the Catholic clergy and laity, despite the official disapproval
* of the Vatican. These tensions surfaced in the conflicts of 1929, 1931 and 1938/9
* between Mussolini and Pope Pius XI. A more fundamental cause of conflict was
* the fact that, despite Mussolini’s totalitarian declarations, Catholicism remained
* a competitor with Fascism for the ultimate loyalty of the Italian people. Hence
* many Catholics continued to prefer Catholic organisations to the Fascist Balilla
* and dopolavoro, especially in the ‘white provinces’. The major cause of the 1931
* crisis, for example, was the growth and activism of Catholic Action, and
* especially its youth wing. An added ingredient in the 1938/9 crisis was
* Mussolini’s introduction of the Racial Laws. Pope Pius XI denounced them as a
* slavish imitation of Hitler and Nazism, which the Vatican by now regarded as
* only a little less evil and threatening than Stalin and Communism. On the eve of
* the Second World War, the Catholic Church was beginning to distance itself
* from the regime, alienated by the increasingly close relationship that had
* developed between Hitler and Mussolini. The latter, for his part, was making
* threatening noises about the future of the Church.
* By the end of the 1930s, in the new totalitarian phase induced by Nazi
* influence, Mussolini was finding the constraints imposed by his relationship with
* the various components of the block of consensus harder to bear. The business
* and landowning elites, no less than the Church and the monarchy, constituted
* insuperable barriers to the extension of the Fascist revolution into the economic
* and social fields, resisting land reform and genuine corporatism (see Chapter 5).
* In broader terms, they absolutely guaranteed that Fascism’s totalitarian
* ambitions would never be realised. Fascism’s failure to eradicate the Mafia in
* Sicily is further proof of the limits of totalitarian power. The man who had given
* birth to the concept of totalitarianism was obliged to admit that he was, ‘the most
* disobeyed dictator in history’.
* Nevertheless, despite the failure to live up to its totalitarian aspirations, it
* would be wrong to argue, as Hannah Arendt has, that the Fascist regime until
* 1938 was: ‘Not totalitarian, just an ordinary, nationalist dictatorship’ (Arendt,
* 1967, p. 257). Fascist Italy between 1922 and 1943 was more than that,
* something more than Franco’s Spain, Salazar’s Portugal or Pilsudski’s Poland.
* Its partial success in achieving its explicit totalitarian vocation differentiates it
* from them and puts it into a different league, along with Hitler’s Germany and
* Stalin’s Russia, even if it fell short of the brutal, terroristic rule of those states
* Between March and July 1933, all other political parties were forced to disband.

The KPD (German Communist Party) had been banned under the presidential

decree of February, after the Reichstag Fire, shortly after Hitler became

chancellor. Many less extreme socialists had also been imprisoned, although

the SPD was not offi cially banned until 22 June. Similarly, the DNVP (the rightwing

nationlist party) lost its role once it became part of the Nazi coalition,

and disbanded itself. On 5 July the Catholic Centre Party followed as part of the

Concordat with the Pope, which was signed later that month (see page 107). The

culmination of this activity was the Law Against the Establishment of Parties of

14 July 1933. This made it a criminal offence to organise any party outside the

NSDAP. Consequently, although there was an election in November 1933, only

the Nazis were able to stand and so took all the Reichstag seats.

Hitler’s one-party state was a centralised state. In the localities, the Nazis had

begun to infi ltrate state (Länder) governments from early in 1933, seizing public

buildings and newspaper offi ces, and from March many state governments

had been forced to resign since they had proved unable to control SA violence.

Germany joins LoN 1926, leaves 1933

Soviet union joins 1934, expelled 1939 (finland)

The Nazi government had already appointed many loyal commissioners to the

states before a law passed in January 1934 formalised the situation. The old

provincial assemblies of the *Länder* of Germany were abolished and all areas

placed under the control of Nazi governors (*Reichstatthalter*) and subordinated to

the Reich government in Berlin. These Nazi governors often also had positions

as local Nazi *Gauleiters* (the party representatives in the area).

By the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 1933,

non-Aryans were forced to retire and Jews and other opponents described

as ‘alien elements’ were purged from positions in the administration, courts,

schools and universities. However, it was not until 1939 that membership of

the Nazi Party became compulsory, and in the interests of efficient government

there was a remarkable continuity of personnel.

The left-wing socialist trade unions were dissolved in May 1933 and the German

Labour Front (DAF) under Robert Ley was set up to replace them. Membership

was compulsory and employees could no longer negotiate over wages and

conditions with employers. New academies, or ‘fronts’, also controlled the

professions and teachers were, for example, required to join the National

Socialist Teachers’ League (NSLB), while in November 1933 university lecturers

were required to sign a declaration in support of Hitler and join the Nazi

Lecturers’ Association.

Hitler’s one-party state was legally established by ‘the Law to Ensure the Unity

of Party and State’ (December 1933). However, the situation was not as simple

as it sounds. Hitler allowed parallel institutions to develop rather than creating

undiluted party rule, so there was competition within the state between

different agencies, and sometimes between different branches of the Nazi

Party itself. For example, in local government the minister-presidents of each

*Land* were retained alongside the new Reich governors. Some intentionalist

historians, such as Karl Bracher and Klaus Hildebrand, believe Hitler did this

on purpose so that he could retain ultimate control. Structuralists such as

Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen believe that this situation was unintentional

and resulted from Hitler’s disinterest and neglect. Furthermore, although by

the end of July 1933 most major interest groups had been brought under Nazi

control and a one-party state had been created, Hitler was not secure until

he had dealt with the radical wing of the SA, while the army had also largely

survived Hitler’s early measures unscathed.

**Night of the Long Knives**

Hitler had been content to use the paramilitary SA to destroy the communist

movement when seeking power. However, he was concerned about the SA’s

violent and sometimes uncontrollable behaviour and about the demands of

its leader, Ernst Röhm, who had ambitions to place himself at the head of a

merged SA and army. Röhm openly condemned Hitler’s compliance with the

élite in 1933 and called for a second revolution to complete the ‘Nazi uprising’.

Hitler could not afford to upset the army, whose loyalty he needed. Since the

army was hostile to the SA, he increasingly took the view that the SA had

served its purpose and was expendable. When Heinrich Himmler and Hermann

Goering (see page 86) spread rumours of a planned coup by the SA, Hitler

decided that it was time to take action.

According to official pronouncement, Röhm and 85 others were killed in

the Night of the Long Knives on 30 June 1934 in order to forestall a revolt. In

**Heinrich Himmler (1900–45)**

Himmler became the head of the

*Schützstaffel* (SS) in 1929 and head

of all German political police outside

Prussia in 1933. He helped organise

the Night of the Long Knives and

in 1936 took over the Gestapo (the

secret police). In December 1940, he

established the Waffen SS. During the

war, the SS Death’s Head Units were

put in charge of the concentration

camps. In June 1944, Himmler

took over the *Abwehr* (the military

intelligence organisation) but his

attempts to seek peace with the allies

led to his arrest. Himmler committed

suicide at the end of the war.

**June 28, 1919: The treaty of Versailles is Signed**The Treaty of Versailles ends [World War One](http://www.sparknotes.com/history/european/ww1/) and imposes heavy reparations payments on Germany.

**November 1920: The First Meeting of the League of Nations**The Assembly of the League of Nations meets for the first time in Geneva, Switzerland. The US is notably absent, the Senate having voted against joining the League in November 1919.

**November 1921: The Washington Conference is Held**The United States convenes the Washington Conference, attended by Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, China, Japan, and Portugal. The Conference results in a naval armaments treaty that sets a ratio for tonnage of capital ships (over 10,000 tons, with guns bigger than eight inches) for Great Britain, the US, Japan, France, and Italy. The ratio agreed upon, in that order, is 5:5:3:1.67:1.67.

**October 30, 1922: Benito Mussolini is Made Italian Premier**King Victor Emmanuel declares Mussolini premier in an attempt to head off violent conflict between the Fascists and the Communists.

**November 9, 1923: The Beer Hall Putsch**Adolf Hitler and General Ludendorf, a World War One hero, lead a small contingent of followers in a harmless, comical attempt at rebellion, for which Hitler is imprisoned for two years.

**January 21, 1924: Vladimir Lenin Dies**Lenin's death leaves some question as to who will be his successor. Joseph Stalin eventually beats out Leon Trotsky to take control of the Soviet government.

**May 11, 1924: The Cartel des Gauches wins the French Election**The Cartel displaces the ruling Bloc National, in a marked victory for the left, but proves unable to govern effectively.

**August 27, 1924: The German Chamber of Deputies Accepts the Dawes Plan**The Dawes Plan restructures the schedule of German reparations payments so as to reduce the amount of annual payments, and grants Germany a large loan.

**December 1, 1925: The Locarno Pacts are Signed**The Locarno Pacts are signed in efforts to stabilize relations with Germany and its neighbors. The pacts usher in a period of peace and prosperity.

**1926: Joseph Pilsudski Becomes Virtual Dictator in Poland**Pilsudski maintains this position until his death in May 1935

**March 1926: The Samuel Commission in England Releases Its Report on Coal Mining**The Samuel Commission, under the Conservative government, releases a report which advises wage cuts for miners. The Triple Alliance responds by striking, which is emulated by many other industries in England to protest he Conservative government's policies.

**April 14, 1931: The Spanish Monarchy is Overthrown and The Republic Is Born**A provisional government is established to take Spain from monarchy to republicanism.

**1932: General Gyula Gombos Comes to Power in Hungary**Gombos becomes prime minister, an office he uses like a dictatorship, setting the tone for Hungarian government during the remaining inter-war years.

**February - July 1932: The final League of Nations Disarmament Conference is Held**The last major League of Nations-sponsored disarmament conference meets from February to July 1932 at Geneva, with 60 nations in attendance, including the United States. However, this conference, like it's predecessors, fails to secure any agreement, and organized disarmament remains an unaccomplished goal.

**1933 - 1934: 1,140,000 Communist Party Members are Expelled by Stalin**Stalin's Central Purge Commission, created in 1933, publicly investigates and tries many party members for treason as Stalin seeks to rid the party of oppositon.

**January 30, 1933: Hitler is Appointed Chancellor of Germany**In an attempt to reel in the chaos of the German government, President Paul von Hindenburg declares Hitler chancellor, the first major step in Hitler's ascent to dictatorship.

**March 23, 1933: The German Reichstag Passes the Enabling Act**The Enabling Act gives Hitler the power to issue decrees with the status of law.

**June 3, 1936: Leon Blum's Popular Front Government Comes to Power in France**The Popular Front, a leftist party, institutes social legislation and allows wide public participation in the government, but ultimately fails to curtail the depreciating economy.

**July 17, 1936: The Spanish Nationalists Begin the Spanish Civil War**Generals Goded, Mola, and Francisco Franco lead troops in rebellion against the republic, sparking the Spanish Civil War.

**April 25, 1937: Spanish Nationalists Bomb Guernica**The small northern town of Guernica is bombed, and civilians are gunned down as they flee the scene. In this brutal massacre 1500 die and 800 are wounded, but the military targets in the town remain intact.

**September 18, 1938: The Munich Pact is Signed**Britain and France appease Hitler by signing the Munich Pact, which grants Hitler control of the Czech Sudetenland.

**March 30, 1939: The Spanish Civil War Ends**Madrid falls to Francisco Franco's forces, effectively ending the Spanish Civil War. Franco's oppressive dictatorship begins.

**September 3, 1939: Britain and France Declare War on Germany**In response to Hitler's continued aggression in Eastern Europe, Britain and France go to war with Germany in an attempt to stop Hitler's bid for global hegemony.

What was this National Socialism with which Hitler was trying to

impregnate Germany? It was a crude claim that the Germans belonged

to a superior race in whose interest other races were to sacrifice whatever

profited—in Hitler's view—the Germans. The others might be called upon

to abandon their territory, their education, their identity, even to be

annihilated. Among the Germans themselves those who accepted National

Socialism were encouraged to destroy the others without regard for any

moral scruple. Hitler's creed was, however, presented with such skill as

to exploit the whole malaise of German society. It claimed to be able to

undo post-Versailles humiliations; it claimed to be about to abolish the

rigid class distinctions which had largely survived into the Republic; it

claimed to be able to find work and a fitting reward for every good German.

It exploited to the full the antipathy felt by provincials towards the Jews

who had made Berlin into the slightly hectic yet brilliant centre of modern

art which it had become. Hitler did not then say what fate he intended for

the Jews, but he sometimes spoke of the physical extermination of one's

enemies. People discounted such talk as unrealistic; indeed many Germans

approved rather of Italian Fascism with its compromises than of Hitler's

real aims. After the clearest evidence of their destructive intentions

Bruning decided in April 1932 that Hitler's Storm Troopers must be

suppressed throughout the Reich. On being re-elected Hindenburg was

asked to agree to this. But he had met Hitler by now and preferred Hitler's

men to the Socialist *Reichsbanner* organisation which existed to defend

the Republic. The upshot was that he dismissed Bruning, appointing

Franz von Papen in his place with a team of ministers which, like those

before 1914, did not depend upon Reichstag support but only upon the

confidence of the head of the state. In July Papen suppressed Otto Braun's

regime in Prussia(which had lost much support in elections in April) and held

fresh national elections. Unemployment was still chronic and the National

Socialists more than doubled the votes they had gained in September 1930.

In August Hitler demanded to be Chancellor with full powers but Hindenburg

refused this: thereupon Hitler insolently expressed his 'solidarity'

with some S.A. men condemned to death for a political murder at

Potempa. In the autumn unemployment did not rise as quickly as in the

last three autumns and in elections in November the Nazis lost two

million votes. In January 1933, making use of quarrels between Papen

and Schleicher, who had been Papen's Minister of Defence, then his successor,

Hitler agreed to be Chancellor with Papen as Vice-Chancellor and

only two Nazi colleagues—Hitler could not wait for the economic recovery

to become more obvious.

Hitler had taken office on condition that a fresh general election should

be held on 5 March 1933 under the administrative control of the Nazis—

he had brought into power with him Goring as Minister of the Interior in

Prussia with a seat in the Reich cabinet and Frick as Reich Minister of

the Interior. Hitler and Goring boasted that this would be the last election

for a thousand years because the Nazis would know what to do with their

majority. Between 30 January and 5 March a tremendous campaign of

intimidation was organised. Already well-known opponents of Hitler

began to vanish into prisons, where they were beaten up. The Reichstag

Fire on 27 February gave the Nazis a wonderful opportunity within less

than a week of the election; claiming that the fire was the signal for a

Communist *coup d'etat,* they declared a state of emergency, increased the

arrests and muzzled the press. Interestingly enough Hitler did not win an

absolute majority; the Centre and the Socialists were not shaken and he

needed the support of the Nationalists, who supplied the majority of

ministers in his cabinet, to give him 52-5 per cent of the votes for the

Reichstag.

He was not deterred by such a trifle. The Communist deputies, mostly

arrested by now, were not allowed to take their seats, and all the other

deputies but the Socialists—a brave speech of protest came from their leader, Otto Wels—were dragooned into voting for full powers to Hitler,

sanctioned by the Enabling Act on 23 March. By this time the first of the

Nazi concentration camps had been established at Dachau near Munich.

The Nazis said these were what Kitchener had invented in South Africa.

They were nothing of the kind. They were carefully thought out places of

detention where anti-Nazis were systematically tormented physically and

psychologically for as long as the Nazis thought fit.

It was extraordinary to observe that Nazi Germany constantly lost sympathy

yet won admiration: opinion in Europe evidently shirked the discreditable

evidence which was painful, and jumped at the impressive

slogans. After the Enabling Act all political parties other than that of

Hitler were abolished, and the rights of Bavaria and the other *Lander*

destroyed in favour of rigid centralisation under the Nazi party. The trade

unions were suppressed in the spring of 1933 in favour of the Nazi Labour

Front, and employers and workers transformed into leaders and following.

The press was strangled. Every newspaper that survived became some

sort of organ of the National Socialist party except for the *Frankfurter*

*Zeitung:* this great liberal paper was allowed a little unreal liberty and

survived until 1941. It suited the Nazis to parade this curious mascot—

before the end, indeed, it became Hitler's property, a birthday present from

his publisher, Max Amann, in April 1939. The effect of seeing and hearing

party slogans at meetings, in the press, on the wireless, everywhere,

warped the attitude of convinced anti-Nazis in spite of themselves.

Anti-Semitic action was at first sporadic. It began to be systematised in

a boycott of Jewish shops ordered by the Nazi party for i April 1933.

There was not much violence on that day. If foreign papers reported anti-

Semitic incidents, the Nazis pointed out how peaceful things were on

1 April and blamed the Jews for stirring up world opinion against Germany.

Gradually it was made impossible for a Jew to practise any profession:

until 1938 it was left at that.

Early in 1934 Hitler ran into some unexpected difficulties. His two

major aims were to destroy the Jews and to acquire territory in eastern

Europe in order to plant German colonists there. The second of these

aims was certain to bring war: therefore Hitler wished to build up a new,

big, efficient army. His old friend Ernst Rohm, the chief of the Storm

Troopers, wished the army to be absorbed by the S.A. men under his

control. The Generals resented this idea, the more so since some of them

knew that the S.A. were really a lot of terrorising thugs. Hitler was against

Rohm's programme because it would make for a less efficient army.

Hoping to cash in on the tension, some conservative proteges of Papen

persuaded the Vice-Chancellor to make a public speech of protest against

many of the characteristics of National Socialism at the University of

Marburg on 17 June; it was evident that the speech was popular.

Hitler extricated himself from this situation with criminal brilliance.

The most important piece of *Gleichschaltung* which had been going on

behind the scenes was that of the police: by April 1934 the whole police

machine had come into the control of Hitler's faithful creature Heinrich

Himmler, who was also the *Reichsfiihrer* of what was originally a special

bodyguard in the S.A. The members of this bodyguard wore black uniforms

(with brown shirts) and were called *Schutzstaffeln* or S.S. The evidence

suggests that Himmler and his S.S. induced the army leaders to expect

a S.A. revolt and the S.A. leaders to expect that the army intended to

crush them. On 30 June and 1 July Hitler, using the S.S., arrested and had

executed a number of S.A. leaders including Rohm himself. At the same

time he had murdered the authors of Papen's speech and a number of

others on the right, including Schleicher, who had criticised Nazi savagery.

The whole thing was justified by Hitler in that he announced that his will

was law. Thus the old legal system which had half survived since the days

of William II was *gleichgeschaltet* together with the S.A.: this was the last

of the *Rechtsstaat* until after 1945. After 1934 the Storm Troopers lost all

importance, and German life was dominated by the S.S., who controlled

the concentration camps. The summer which had seen Hitler's first meeting

with Mussolini and the murders of 30 June and 1 July, a few weeks later

witnessed the murder of Dollfuss by Austrian Nazis in Vienna1 and culminated

in the death of Hindenburg in August and Hitler's succession to

1 The timing of this seems not to have pleased Hitler (or so he made it appear): the action

in itself was certainly not unwelcome to him.

him. Hitler never used the title of President, but as head of state he was

able to oblige every soldier in the army to swear an oath of personal

allegiance to him.

From 1934 to 1938 life in Germany did not seem to change very much.

Employment increased; it did so in other countries but received extra

stimulus from German rearmament; conscription was officially reintroduced

in March 1935 with its own social consequences. Unless one were

a Nazi official foreign travel was restricted by the shortage of foreign

currency which kept raw materials short. Schacht's financial brilliance at

Ihe Reichsbank and the Ministry of Economics made the best of the

circumstances (see above, ch. m). Strikingly little was done about housing;

Hitler after all was interested in colonising eastern Europe, not in enlarging

the cities of German home territory.

Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, kept up an atmosphere of

tension especially with regard to Germans said to be persecuted abroad:

in the Saar until the plebiscite in January 1935, in Danzig, Memel,

Czechoslovakia. After January 1934, when the Ten Year Pact with Poland

was made, the Germans in Poland were forgotten until 1939. Goebbels

was the master of Germany's artistic life now; the only important artist

to come to terms with him was Richard Strauss, who became head of the

Reich Chamber of Music. The schools and universities were caught up in

the Nazi Youth organisations which put emphasis on para-military

training. The old duelling Corps of the universities, which had survived

through the Weimar Republic, were suppressed: Hitler disliked all aristocratic

traditions. The Catholic church had at first extended something like

a welcome to Natianal Socialism, for the first positive recognition the

Nazi state had received from abroad had been the Concordat in July 1933,

and Hitler's hostility to Communism was welcomed by the Vatican. However,

Catholic and Nazi doctrines were fundamentally irreconcilable, and

Pope Pius XI became increasingly aware of this as his message to the

German clergy, *Mit brennender Sorge,* made clear in March 1937. The

German Protestants were divided in their reactions to National Socialism,

but from the beginning those who followed Dibelius and Niemoller1 protested;

they enjoyed a certain support among Reichswehr officers (the

future President Heuss and his wife were close friends of Dibelius). It

should be added that Berlin with Hamburg was always less Nazi than the

rest of Germany; National Socialism was less oppressive there and anti-

Nazi jokes always circulated.

In September 1937 Berlin was obliged to parade for Mussolini. In

November Hitler brought his plans up to date. This meant a final break

with the old pre-1914 ruling class that winter, when Ribbentrop succeeded

Freiherr von Neurath at the German Foreign Office. Generals Blomberg

and Fritsch were disgraced and Hitler himself became commander-in-

chief. Ulrich von Hassell was dropped from the German Embassy in

Rome, and when at last the new Ambassador was nominated he turned

out to be Hans Georg von Mackensen, a Junker who had defected to the

Nazis. At this time Papen, who might almost be described in the same

terms, was recalled from Vienna, where in any case an Envoy was about

to become superfluous. All these changes synchronised with the resignation

of Schacht as Minister of Economics and his succession by a tool of the

Nazi party called Walther Funk. Thus the decks were cleared for action. Already in 1933 Hitler's success in Germany had intoxicated the

German minorities throughout eastern Europe. The absorption of Austria

into Nazi Germany in March 1938 was like a second injection and all the

Sudeten Germans except the Socialists rushed to join Henlein's Sudeten

German party: they took care to know nothing of the ugly side of the

Anschluss. The Czechs were surrounded by now—the Poles filled the only

gap apart from Hungary—and it cannot be supposed that their partial

mobilisation in May, which so much angered Hitler, really affected his

plans appreciably. In his eyes a Czechoslovak democracy had no right to

exist—it both hampered and irritated him. By the autumn of 1938 he

wanted all the old pre-1914 Austrian *Lebensraum* under his control: he

wanted it anyway but he began sometimes to admit that he wanted it as

a preliminary to a war against the West.

In the autumn of 1934 the U.S.S.R. was brought

into the League of Nations with a permanent seat in the Council and

BeneS decided to link himself with his French ally in making a cautious

treaty with the Russians. This coincided with Henlein's election campaign

and brought furious noises from all the nationalistic Germans; BeneS was

betraying Europe to Bolshevism, they said, and making Czechoslovakia

into a Russian air-base. Blow rained upon blow. Hitler used the opportunity

provided by Italy's invasion of Abyssinia and quarrel with the

League of Nations to remilitarise the Rhineland, an action which probably

emasculated Czechoslovakia's treaty with France. Mussolini began to

realise that feeling in Austria was not only anti-Italian—which it always

had been—but also essentially *grossdeutsch,* and in acquiescing in advance

in the Austro-German Agreement of July 1936 he in fact abandoned the

cause of Austrian independence.

In his good-for-nothing days in Vienna, before he went to Munich in

1913, Hitler had been proudly old-style Austrian Pan-German. For him

not merely 1919 but 1866 had to be undone, and Austria and Bohemia

united with Germany. By November 1937 the 'Hossbach Memorandum'

shows that he had decided to put all this in order:' our first objective must

be to overthrow Czechoslovakia and Austria simultaneously'1—this

appeared as a single operation to him. Schuschnigg, who had succeeded Dollfuss as Chancellor of Austria,

was an ambiguous character. With the intense German feeling of the

Tyrolese he combined ardent Catholicism: the two together seemed to

paralyse him. Like the Weimar authorities in 1931-2 he was, however,

galvanised into some kind of action by the discovery of Nazi terrorist

plans for Austria. At the instigation of Papen, Hitler's envoy to Vienna

from 1934 to 1938, he agreed to visit Hitler in February 1938, and was

browbeaten by the German Chancellor into a tentative surrender. On

returning to Vienna he decided to make his own appeal to the Austrians

by holding a plebiscite. Hitler may have feared the result. At all events he

decided to seize Austria without for the moment attacking Czechoslovakia.

On the contrary, when on 12 March the German army moved into

Austria, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin was assured that no threat

whatever to his country was involved

Owing to the Munich conference Hitler destroyed the first

Czechoslovak Republic in two stages; it seems clear that he would have

preferred to crush it by one quick war. By March 1939 when he set up

the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, a Slovakia dependent upon

Germany, and gave Ruthenia back to Hungary, he had acquired tremendous

economic power. The Anschluss had put under German control all

kinds of central European banking and industrial connections. But in

Prague the Czechs had built up something of an economic centre for the

Little Entente. Czech bankers had invested considerable sums in Yugoslavia,

an undeveloped country rich in copper, lead and bauxite: they had

hoped to push their way into Rumania, the only European country other

than Russia then known to produce oil, though in fact they could not

readily compete with the big oil companies which were American, British

and Dutch.

Since coming into power Hitler and his economic advisers, first and

foremost Schacht, had seemed to come to the rescue of the east European

peasantry by buying up their food produce. Germany, in view of her currency troubles, paid for such purchases in kind with whatever she

needed to export. Ingeniously the smaller, weaker countries were made

by Schacht to become dependent on her, their currencies linked with

Germany's. Not very willingly the Yugoslav government had joined in

economic sanctions against Italy during the Abyssinian war; instead of

selling to Italy the Yugoslavs found they could sell more to Germany.

(When the British stopped sending coal the Italians found the Germans

could supply it.) The Hungarians similarly found that in spite of the Rome

Protocols they could sell more to the Germans. With the seizure of Prague

all former Czech investments came into German control, including of

course the great Skoda armament works. A German *Mitteleuropa* had

been created overnight. It was reinforced by the German-Rumanian Commercial

Treaty of 23 March 1939. Oil was becoming more and more

important. This treaty, which was concluded for at least five years, laid

down that joint German-Rumanian companies were to intensify the exploitation

of Rumania's oil and other natural resources. The Germans,

who had been present here, it has been seen, before the first world war but

then expelled at the end of it, now acquired 'free zones' in key positions

in Rumania; they were to provide the necessary equipment for exploiting

the oilfields. This treaty, the Germans presumed, would provide the

model for further agreements ensuring them economic control throughout

south-eastern Europe.

**THE ATTACK UPON POLAND EXPANDS INTO**

**A SECOND WORLD WAR**

In May 1939 the treaty which Mussolini called the Steel Pact was signed

in Berlin between Germany and Italy. It was a frankly aggressive treaty

which intensified the intimidation of Europe by Hitler and Mussolini.

It misled world opinion in a way which suited Hitler in that it concealed

the weakness of Italy behind Germany's strength. Almost immediately

after the conquest of Abyssinia Mussolini had sent large contingents of

Italian 'volunteers' to fight for Franco. In its timing the Steel Pact seemed

to crown the success of Franco and the Axis powers in Spain after nearly

three years' fighting. The Germans had not engaged more than small

groups of airmen, but Mussolini had exhausted both his armies and his

economic resources. As soon as he had signed the pact he began to be

afraid of its consequences. Hitler, however, felt more assured. By now

Mussolini had followed his example and introduced anti-Semitic measures

into Italy. Beyond the frontiers directly controlled by the Germans, the

governments of Hungary, Poland and Rumania were glad to buy favour

in Berlin by anti-Jewish gestures. The time of annihilation was not to

come for two years yet. But the existence of the scapegoat through which

one could curry favour was one of Hitler's weapons in the war of nerves which he manipulated in such masterly fashion. Everyone's life in eastern

Europe was affected, what they heard or read or said or saw stimulated

anti-Semitism and discouraged tolerance.

It should, however, be observed that Hitler knew that German opinion

was unenthusiastic about war. After the cool reception of his armoured

division in Berlin in September 1938, in November he instructed journalists

to work for greater bellicosity. The fact that this same month saw an

organised pogrom all over Germany, the so-called *Reichskristallnacht,* with

loss of life and much destruction of Jewish property was not accidental :\*

from this time onwards the German and Austrian Jews were systematically

ruined economically. After Prague Hitler intended to liquidate Poland

should it not prove pliant, and about this German opinion, in eastern

Germany at least, was keener although the accompaniment of a pact with

Soviet Russia was not likely to be popular. Thus

Beck's appeasement of Nazi Germany became very unpopular and the

Polish Generals prepared resistance. But their equipment and technical

knowledge were hopelessly out of date, and the country was one of the

poorest, by any standards, in Europe. When Britain and France in the

spring of 1939 offered to guarantee its frontiers Hitler decided upon a

punitive expedition to put an end to Poland; this should teach the Western

powers a salutary lesson that they seemed to have forgotten since Munich.

Stalin's decision in August to come to terms with Hitler rather than with

the Western powers facilitated Hitler's design (see below, ch. xxni).

The destruction of Poland combined with the 'phoney' war against

France and Britain did not seem to change life in eastern Europe for the

time being: Hungary (enlarged by a big piece of Transylvania in November

1938) as well as Italy seemed to flourish on their neutrality. (The *Reichskristallnacht* was the night between 9 and 10 November. The excuse had been

the murder by a Jew of a German diplomatist in Paris, but Goebbels would have found

another pretext easily enough.) The Polish war did, however, bring the realisation of Hitler's true aims much nearer

in two ways. It caused an increase of tension in the Protectorate and a

students' demonstration in Prague which gave the Nazis their excuse for

closing the Czech university; this led on to the ending of all higher education

for the Czechs, a part of the destruction of the national life of the

inferior Slav races. Directly, the conquest of Poland provided the positive

gain of *Lebensraum.* Rather more than the territory lost by Germany to

Poland in 1919-21 was re-annexed to Germany and the Poles expelled

from it. On 7 October 1939 Hitler appointed Himmler to be *Reichskommissar*

*fur die Festigung deutschen Volkstums* in charge of bringing in

German colonists: this was not a moment too soon, for Himmler had

already been perplexed as to where to settle Germans who had opted to

leave the Italian South Tyrol after the Steel Pact. The Poles who were

expelled from the homes their fathers and grandfathers had lived in under

William II (when they had been a minority on the scale of the Sudeten

Germans in Czechoslovakia but with no such 'minority' rights) were sent

further east to what was denominated the *General-Gouvernement;* the

Nazi authorities intended to neglect this economically so that Polish life

there should be doomed to decay. The atmosphere in Germany itself was

not very gay during the winter of 1939-40; sympathies were on the side of

the Finns against Hitler's new friend, Stalin, in the 'winter war'.